

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3275

INFO AMCONSUL ASMARA

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO

AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

USCINCEUR

USIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L ADDIS ABABA 2045

E.O.11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT ET

SUBJ: THE "DIRG", ERITREA AND THE PSYCHOLOGICAL CLIMATE

REF: ADDIS 1986

1. ALTHOUGH IN CURRENT CIRCUMSTANCES OUR ABILITY ADEQUATELY TO ASSESS THE PSYCHOLOGICAL CLIMATE IN NON-INSURGENT ETHIOPIA IS LIMITED, WE HAVE IMPRESSION THAT "DIRG'S" PROPAGANDA AND MEDIA MANIPULATION HAVE CREATED PSYCHOLOGICAL CLIMATE SUPPORTIVE OF PMAC'S CURRENT HARD-LINE POLICY ON ERITREA.

2. WHETHER IT BE HIGHLY PROFESSIONAL USE OF TELEVISION IN URBAN AREAS, MATERIAL PRESENTED TO LARGELY ILLITERATE RURAL POPULATION OVER RADIO, OR ORCHESTRATION OF DEMONSTRATIONS (DESSIE WAS SHUT DOWN TO CELEBRATE ETHIOPIAN UNIT YESTERDAY AND GONDAR'S TURN IS
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TODAY), PATRIOTIC EMOTIONS ARE SUCCESSFULLY BEING MOBILIZED

IN SUPPORT OF PMAC MILITANCY FOR THE OBJECTIVE OF PRESERVING ETHIOPIA'S NATIONAL UNITY. THE IMAGE PROJECTED THROUGH THE MEDIA IS THAT OF A GOVERNMENT IN CONTROL OF EVENTS WHICH IS WIDELY SUPPORTED BY THE POPULATION IN ITS HANDLING OF THE ERITREAN DISSIDENTS.

3. WITH THE OLD ORDER DISCREDITED AND A COMBINATION OF CIRCUMSTANCES, NOTABLY INCLUDING THE DROUGHT AND THE PREOCCUPATION WITH DOMESTIC POLITICS, SERVING TO SHRINK ETHIOPIAN PERCEPTIONS OF THE SOMALI THREAT, THE COMBINATION OF "A HANDFUL OF ERITREAN RIFFRAFF" BACKED BY THE MALIGNANT TRADITIONAL ARAB ARCHENEMY IS BEING EXPLOITED IN THE CLASSIC TRADITIONAL STYLE TO SERVE AS A USEFUL TARGET AGAINST WHICH TO UNIFY OTHERWISE DISPARATE ETHIOPIAN OPINION, ELEMENTS OF WHICH INEVITABLY ARE AWARE OF THE MANIFOLD SHORTCOMINGS OF THE CURRENT REGIME.

4. ALTHOUGH PEOPLE IN ADDIS HAVE NOTED THAT ERITREAN RESISTANCE HAS NOW CONTINUED WITH SOME EFFECTIVENESS FOR A FORTNIGHT OF VIRTUALLY CONTINUOUS CLASHES IN ONE PART OR ANOTHER OF THE NORTHERN INSURGENT ZONE, LITTLE APPEARS TO BE KNOWN OF THE COST IN BLOOD AND TREASURE ALREADY INCURRED BY THE GOVERNMENTALS. THE NATURE OF THE CONFLICT, MOREOVER, IS SUCH THAT GUERRILLA SUCCESSES CAN BE PERCEIVED ONLY INCREMENTALLY WHILE GOVERNMENT LOSSES ARE LIKELY TO REMAIN VERY LIMITED IN MOST ENCOUNTERS WITH THE INSURGENTS. AS RESULT, WE WOULD ANTICIPATE THAT THE AUTHORITIES WILL BE ABLE TO CONTINUE PERHAPS FOR A CONSIDERABLE LENGTH OF TIME TO PRESERVE THE IMAGE ABOVE-DESCRIBED, VIZ., THAT OF AN AROUSED WARRIOR-NATION EXERCISING RESTRAINT BUT READY TO LAUNCH HUGE FORCES AT "A HANDFUL OF TREACHEROUS RIFFRAFFS" DESTINED TO BE SUBMERGED IN THE "SHAME OF DEFEAT."

5. IT GOES WITHOUT SAYING THAT VICTIMS OF THE REVOLUTION, THEIR RELATIVES AND THE TIGRENYA-SPEAKING MINORITY SCATTERED THROUGHOUT THE BODY OF ETHIOPIA DO NOT SHARE THESE SENTIMENTS AND THAT SKEPTICS FROM OTHER MINORITY GROUPS ARE CLOSER TO THEM THAN TO THE DOMINANT AMHARA/GALLA COMBINATION. IT MAY ALSO BE THAT THE OVERKILL FACTOR WILL INCREASINGLY BEAR ON LITERATE ELITES WHO SEEM LIKELY AT SOME POINT TO START REJECTING THE MASSIVE DOSES OF PROPAGANDA DISHED UP DAILY IN THE PRESS.

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